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SUBJECT: TALKING POINTS FOR AUGUST 20 CONSULTATIONS ON SYG  
REPORT ON ELECTIONS IN SUDAN

¶1. USUN may draw from the talking points in paragraph 2 for the August 20 consultations on the SYG Report on Elections in Sudan.

¶2. Begin talking points:

-- We would like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive and incisive report detailing the preparations for national elections in Sudan, and for identifying tasks needing completion to prepare for the elections. We also express our sincere appreciation for the work of UNMIS and other UN entities in planning and assisting in the efforts to help ensure that free and fair elections take place in Sudan. Today, I would like to make several points.

-- I would like to begin by acknowledging the progress that has been made towards holding national elections in Sudan. In anticipation of the elections, 71 political parties have been registered by the Political Parties Affairs Council. Sudan has created a National Elections Commission (NEC), appointed a Southern Sudan elections commission and 25 state commissions, and passed a National Elections Act; however, much work remains.

-- As discussed in the Secretary-General's report, political freedom, including freedom of press, speech, and assembly must be respected. They form the cornerstone of a free and fair electoral environment. We strongly urge the Government of National Unity, the National Assembly, and the Government of Southern Sudan to take steps to ensure they are provided for both by law and in practice.

-- We remain concerned that there is no final resolution of concerns related to census results which would permit the final delimitation of constituencies to be completed without challenge. The resolution of these concerns is an essential part of the electoral process. Although we urge all parties to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) to conclude a final and durable agreement, constituency delimitation is already underway. Agreement between the parties on transparent procedures for delimitation of remaining constituencies, primarily in the South, is needed without further delay. We are also concerned that the complaint period for constituency delimitation has begun prior to the completion of delimitation and without the public release of delimitation information or clarification of the procedures for filing a complaint. We urge UNMIS and other concerned UN partners to continue to press the NEC to develop transparent and inclusive procedures regarding the administration of all electoral processes.

-- In addition, the lack of policies addressing requirements for voter identification documentation and the registration of internally displaced persons and refugees creates conditions that could disenfranchise significant portions of the Sudanese voting population. We acknowledge UNMIS, attempt to bring these issues to the attention of the NEC, and support their efforts to work with the NEC to develop transparent policies to enable the greatest number of persons

to exercise their right to vote. UNMIS must continue to press the NEC to develop policies and procedures aimed at ensuring that legitimate Sudanese citizens have an opportunity to cast votes.

-- Also, given the current literacy rate in Sudan and the population's lack of recent experience with elections, substantive voter education programs are critical to enabling Sudanese citizens to understand electoral processes and procedures. Voter education programs should also inform the population of the options and choices that will be before them when they vote. UNMIS and the other collaborating UN entities must continue to work with the NEC to formulate and deliver an effective voter education program that addresses the needs of every region. We urge the Government of Sudan to encourage the NEC to work closely with groups such as UNMIS, UNDP, and IFES to coordinate efforts to transparently address technical electoral issues and develop and implement voter education throughout the country. It is also important for domestic and international election monitors to be able to observe the entire electoral process. We urge UNMIS and UNAMID, within their mandate, to help facilitate election observation.

-- The lack of an operational plan and budget for the administration and organization of elections is another cause for concern. This in turn affects the readiness of the high committees responsible for supervising elections at the Southern Sudan and state levels. Unless an operational plan is approved soon, not only will electoral administration be impacted, the international community will not be able to secure the funding and materials necessary to support the electoral process. Furthermore, holding multiparty, national elections in Sudan will require the assistance not only of UNMIS but UNAMID. Elections conducted in Darfur include additional difficulties such as voter identification and registrations, logistics, and security. UNMIS and UNAMID must continue developing and implementing a strategy whereby UNAMID can provide all required election support and assistance within its existing resources and capabilities. Moreover, we hope UNMIS will be proactive in its efforts to provide maximum assistance under its mandate and available resources.

-- Finally, during the election period it is essential that there be sufficient security and safety to permit the voting population to cast their ballots in an environment free of insecurity or retribution. We commend UNMIS and UNAMID for their efforts to date in preparing police training materials, and look forward to receiving the report on threat assessment and plans for elections security. In the meantime, we hope that UNAMID and UNMIS police will continue to work with the national and local authorities in Northern and Southern Sudan to prepare local police to carry out elections-related security functions. We hope UNMIS will also explore additional means of supporting electoral readiness, such as assisting with transportation resources.

-- The elections, while important, are not an end in and of themselves. They are a step in a process to bring stability and security to Sudan. In order for the elections to be successful, the issues relating to political freedom, transparent constituency delimitation and registration, administration, security, and voter education must be addressed. The United States fully supports the work of the UN in this regard, and calls on the Government of Sudan to address the outstanding legal, administrative, and security concerns so that transparent and credible elections can be held.

End points.  
CLINTON